

AN
ESSAY
UPON THE
Reasonableness and Usefulness
OF THE
Catholick Religion.

Humbly offered to the serious Consideration of such Persons as may be unhappily seduced, either into Atheistick Doubts on one hand; as looking on Religion meerly as a party Engine occasionally set to serve a Turn; or into Religious Factions, Feuds, Heresies and Schisms on the other Hand.

And particularly recommended to the Consideration of those learned Writers, the Bishop of *Hereford*, Dr. *Snape*, Dr. *Tindale*, the Lord *Molesworth*, and Sir *Richard Steel*.

L O N D O N:

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THE INTRODUCTION.



Mongst so many, and so endless Disputes, Feuds, and Animosities about Religion, that have so miserably disturbed the Peace of Mankind ; each Party dignifying, by the specious Title of the *Catholic* or *Universal Religion* ; such System, or Sett of Notions, Modes, and Fashions, as their own particular Education, Self Interest, or Caprice, hath recommended to their Option, and then with all the Violence, Entrage and Fury, that bigotted Zeal and partial Prejudice can inspire, tyrannically imposing the same as indispensable Duties upon all other Persons ; branding, pursuing,
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and mal-teraiting, as Enemies to God, whoever doth not implicitly submit to the Dictates of Man, and blindly come into all their Sentiments and Measures; and mutually declaring the Notions, Modes, and Fashions of each other, to be odious and detestable in the Sight of God, and worthy of the most rigorous Punishments and Severities; under the Pretence of Gods Cause pursuing their own selfish Ends, and wreaking their own private Hatred and Revenge upon their Adversaries, to the great Scandal and Disgrace of the Name of Religion, it seems never the less to be generally agreed by all Parties, that there is a genuine *Catholick* Religion, tho' they can't agree where to fix it; and that there are spurious and corrupt Religions, tho' no Party will acknowledge, what themselves profess to be so; to distinguish therefore what truly is the Pure Undeiled (or unmixed) *Catholick* Religion, from what is spurious and corrupted by Heterogenious Mixtures; as it is an inquiry of the utmost Importance to
Mankind

Mankind, so doth it require a just Freedom of Thought, a Mind free and disengaged from all Partiality, Prejudice, or Prepossession; that will, with equal Patience, Candour, and Indifferency, examine, weigh, and allow the full Scope and Force of Reasons on every side alike. As to the Methods of going about such Inquiry; 'tis certainly proper, first, to consider the genuine Sense and Meanings of these two words, (*viz. Religion and Catholick*) and then to examine candidly each Subject in debate, whether the Conditions or Qualifications thereof do so quadrate to the Sense and Meanings of these two Words, that it may properly bear the Names both of Religion and *Catholick*, or not. As to the word *Catholick*, it plainly means the same as universal, or what admits of no Exception. As to the Word Religion, its proper Sense and Meaning is as follows, *viz.*

RELIGION is a settled Intent or Disposition of the Mind, to observe duly, in the Conduct of our Lives, such

Precepts as we believe were injoyned us by our Creator, with Regard to those Rewards and Punishments that we believe God hath annexed to the due Observance or Relation of those Precepts.

THIS, to my Apprehension, seems a just Boundary or Definition of the Word Religion. That 'tis too large, too comprehensive, as containing something that is not implied in the Word Religion, none surely will object ; nor can I think it too narrow, as being restrained to the Precepts of God, exclusive of human Precepts ; for tho' there may indeed be Duties incumbent upon Man that do arise from human Precepts, yet no one surely will contend to rank those human Precepts in the same Order and Level with those of God, and to confound those Sanctions and Duties that immediately appertain to Religion, with those that appertain immediately to Civil, or to *domestick* Government.

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THIS then being allowed to be the genuine Notion, Meaning or Signification of the Word, Religion the Inquiry naturally offers it self, what are these several Precepts and thence emerging Duties, which are the Object of Religion, and which are usually, by a familiar Allegory, call'd by the Name of Religion.

BUT here 'tis requisite previously to distinguish the *Catholick* or *Universal* Religion (which consists only of such Precepts and thence emerging Duties, as are of *universal* Obligation, and incumbent equally in all Mankind, of all Ranks and Conditions, and in all Times and Places without Exception) from the particular and peculiar Religion of the *Isralitish* Nation ; that being the only Nation, to whom God, (as we believe) over and above the *universal* Duties enjoined to them in common with the rest of Mankind, did, besides thro' a peculiar Grace and Favour condescend by his *Prophets* to give particular Precepts suiting and accommodated

modated to the peculiar Genius and Occasions of that Nation ; God vouchsafing to be even the National Lawgiver of that People ; so that their Religion and the System of their National Laws were adequately the same ; whatever was Parcel of their Law, was likewise Parcel of their Religion ; as being all equally of Divine Institution, all equally the Precepts of God, a Case in no wise incident to any other Nation ; the notion therefore of diverse national or particular Religions upon Examination will appear to be altogether spurious and absurd ; diversity of National Laws, the Decrees of their respective Legislatures, adjusted and accommodated to their respective Genius and Occasions well may be, but what People besides the *Isralites* can justly pretend that God has by any manifest Revelation instituted Laws or Precepts peculiar to their Nation ? what is generally called a National Religion of this or that Country or People, usually consists, partly of certain Laws, Decrees,

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or institutions, of their respective Legislature, which they have been taught to revere and esteem more sacred than the rest, and partly of certain Superstitious, Customs, and Notions, introduced by the Ignorance of the many, and the crafty Artifices of some self-designing Persons, and which, by Length of Time have acquired that Veneration and Esteem of Sacredness that is usually applied to Antiquity ; since then what is commonly termed the national Religion of this or that Country, is not of Divine Institution, but whose Original and Authority is meerly human, 'tis very improperly called by the Name of Religion, thereby confounding and putting upon the same Level, what is human with what is divine ; there never having been any true national Religion extant in the World, but that of the *Israelites*. But as the Precepts of that Religion (being adapted to the peculiar Genius and Occasions of that Nation only) were in some Measure at least incompatible to, so were they in
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no Measure obligatory upon, the rest of Mankind.

WE shall therefore confine this Inquiry to those *Catholick* Fundamental Precepts, and thence emerging Duties, which constitute and make up the *Catholick* or universal Religion; and which are properly stiled *Catholick*, as being of universal Obligation; and Fundamental, as being the Ground on which are founded, not only the particular Religion of the *Isrelites*, but also all Duties arising from human Precepts.

NOW amidst so many Controversies and Disputes about what is genuine, and what is spurious, in Religion; it seems necessary to seek some fixed Standard, some self-evident, demonstrable or at least uncontested Rules, for Principles, by which to examine and essay the pretended and contested Duties of Religion. Now the most obvious and congenial Topicks or Sources, whence to draw such Rules or Principles, seems to be the Contemplation of the respective Natures
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or Essences of these three principal Relatives of Religion, *viz.* Of its Author, or Institution, God ; of its adequate Subject, Mankind ; and of the End or Purpose, for which God may be presumed to have instituted Religion.

AS to the Nature or Essence of God ; he is generally, if not universally, allowed to be, an intelligent, all-wise, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, independent, self-sufficient, and all-perfect Being ; from whose Wisdom and Power the World and all things therein received their Being, whence he is called the universal Father and Creator of all things ; and towards Mankind infinitely benevolent ; which last Attribute is variously paraphrased and expressed in the holy Scriptures, sometimes by the Words Infinitely Good, Gracious, Merciful, the God of Love, a tender and indulgent Father, and the like ; and seems indeed to be the darling Attribute in which he takes most Delight, and from which doth spring,

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and on which are grounded, those other Attributes meerly relative to Mankind, *viz.* his Veracity and his Justice.

THESE Essential Attributes, or Articles of the Divine Essence, seem to be uncontestably agreed to by all, who do allow the real Existence of a God ; and though 'tis currently suggested, that there be Persons, and those of acute Apprehension and penetrating Judgment, who doubt or disbelieve the real Existence of a God ; yet upon mature Consideration of the Matter, 'twill appear somewhat hard to come into that Suggestion ; 'tis plainly supposing them to be at the same time both clear-sighted and stark-blind, both acute and also stupid to the last Degree.

SUPPOSE a curious Piece of Clockwork, with great Variety of Motions, was shewed to some *Indian*, or other Person, unacquainted with such Works of Art, the various Purposes to which these Motions respectively answered,

swered, and also the several Springs, Wheels, and Checks, by which these Motions were excited, measured and controuled precisely to those respective Purposes, distinctly indicated and explain'd ; might he not reasonably conclude it to be the Work of some very skilful Artist ; or perhaps, thinking it to be above the Art of Man, he might suppose it to be the Work of some intelligent Being of more Skill and Power than Mankind was capable of ; this he might reasonably say, and we reasonably expect from him ; but should he, on the contrary, suppose those Movements to be form'd and adjusted so exactly and harmoniously to those Purposes, by some casual random Conflux of Matter, without the Direction or Disposition of any intelligent Being ; how ridiculous and absurd should we think such a Person, and how grossly stupid such a Person's Intellectuals ? Farther, should a Man see a Gamester's Dice, upon occasion, rise twenty, forty, a hundred times

together uniformly the same Casts, all precisely for his Purpose, or see the Numbers of his Casts upon a Wager to such Purpose, rise and fall orderly in regular Sequences ; or see him always have a special Cast to serve his Turn, and yet would suffer himself to be persuaded that those so regular Events were all merely fortuitous and casual, all fair Chance, without any Artifice or Menage ; should we not justly esteem such a Person ridiculously silly, and admirably qualified to be a compleat Cully and a Bubble ?

YET how much more absurd are those Notions that some impute to Persons, whom they style Atheists, and yet allow them to be Persons of Learning and Sagacity, of absolute Freedom of Thought and subtle Judgment ; are not the OEconomy and Adjustment of the Parts of (even vegetable, and much more of) Animal Bodies infinitely more curious than any Clockwork, or other Product of human Artifice and Skill ? how great is the Variety of the Parts ? how curiously orga-

organized? how justly accommodated to their respective Ends and Purposes? How fine and subtle is the Structure of the Minuter Vessels? what Eye can trace, what Sense discern those infinitely slender Vessels, that convey and supply Nourishment and Growth to the Coats of the capillary Veins and Arteries; how curiously are the Stomach, Mouth, and Bowels framed and fitted for the Confection and Defecation of the Chyle or Pabulum of the Blood? How well the Heart, the Lungs, the Arteries and Veins are adapted for the mixing and converting into Blood the Chyle, and for conveying and circulating that common Principle of Warmth and Nourishment, the Blood, in regular Periodes thro' the whole and every part of the wonderfully previous *Fabrick*? How admirably curious are the Valves or Sluices, with which the Blood returning towards the Heart is stayed from regurgitating 'twixt the Vibrations of the Heart, and thereby enforced to keep
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a steady Course, and sometimes even Perpendicularly to ascend? How admirable is the Force of that main Spring of Life, the Heart? How admirable the Reciprocation of the Lungs; How admirable the Texture and Disposition of the Brain and Nerves? and how curiously contrived for the secreting and dispensing thro' the whole animated System those Principles of Sense and voluntary Motion, the animal Spirits? In a Word, how justly are all the Parts and Organs of the whole animated Machine adapted to their respective Functions? And how nicely are those various Animal Functions complicated and accommodated so as not to interfere, but even mutually to aid and assist each other?

CAN all this Harmony of Purposes and Means so curiously adjusted, repeated thro' so many Periods of Time in each Instance, and propagated thro' so many Instances (each Animal and vegetable repeating thro' so many Successive Ages, the Pristin Resemblance,
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Form and essential Properties of its respective Prototype or Specie;) can all this manifold Regularity and perpetual Uniformity of Nature be imputed to meer blind random Chance, without the grossest Absurdity of reasoning? no certainly, no Man of common Sense, who will freely and impartially think and reason upon Nature, can believe that those means could be so justly and so constantly adapted to such Purposes without the Disposition of some intelligent Being; and that too of Power and Wisdom infinitely superiour to those of Man. For even the Wisest Man, is so far from being Skilled or able to dispose the Organization of the Child that he begets, that he neither can determine and controul, nor even guess its Sex, 'till it is actually form'd, and excluded from the Womb; which plainly proves the existence of some, Being or Beings of Superiour Skill and Power than Man. And from the constant Uniformity of each several Species
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of Beings in the World thro' all Successive Ages, without any essential Change or Alteration, doth obviously arise a convincing Argument that they are all and ever were the Work of one and the same Supreme Artist, without the Controul or Check of any other (whether Superiour or Co-ordinate) Being.

NOW this Supreme intelligent Being, so infinitely Superiour to Man in Power and Wisdom, who hath made himself known to Man, not only by his revealed Word, but even by the Gift of Reason, or the Light of Nature; this Being is what we signify by the Name of God. Hence we may justly conclude with the Psalmist, that he is not only in the moral, but also in the Physical and literal Sense, a Fool, whoever says in his Heart there is no God: and likewise that Atheism is by no means a Consequence of Free-thinking and impartial Reasoning; but the direct contrary.

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THE Existence of a Deity being thus evinced, in as much as he doth in no wise depend, either as to his Existence, or as to his well-being, on the Will or any Acts of Mankind ; Man being neither capable of adding to, or detracting, any the least Tittle from his Power or Beatitude ; those his Attributes, which relate to Mankind and on which is grounded all Religion, *viz.* his pure and disinterested Benevolence or Love to Mankind, his impartial and unbiasable Justice, and his unblemished Veracity, may by course of plain Reasoning be strongly inferred. For as the only Principles, Motives, or Causes of Malevolence in one intelligent Being towards another are Hatred and Envy ; and as the only Grounds of Hatred and Envy, are the actual Suffering, or the Fear of Harm, or of Rivalship ; since God can neither suffer nor fear any such thing from Man, 'tis plain he is incapable of any Principle of Malevolence towards Mankind ; from whence 'tis necessary that

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the Disposition of God towards Man must rest on one of these two Alternatives *viz.* meer Indifference and Disregard, or pure disinterested Benevolence. And as on one side, such absolute Indifference and Disregard to the Welfare of Man seems very little agreeable to the Care and Skill imputed on his Formation; so on t'other side, Man's Capacity of Happiness and Misery beyond all other Creatures (as being capable not only of sensual, but also of Contemplative or Rational Joys, Felicities, and Grievs) seems to denote him formed to be the properest Object of the divine Bounty and Compassion. And as from God's infinite Wisdom or Omniscience, it plainly follows that he can by no means be inveigled or deceived; so from his Omnipotence and Self-sufficiency doth it likewise follow, that he is incapable of being tempted by any Baits or Allurements, by Hope, by Fear, by partial Love or Hate, to corrupt his Justice or to violate his Truth. So much
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for the Nature and Existence of the Deity, the Author or efficient Cause of Religion : Next comes in course to be considered Man the adæquate Subject thereof. Now,

AS to the general Nature of Mankind, by which he is capable of Pleasure, Ease, and Pain ; by which he is endued with an instinct or judicial Faculty to discern what is Physically good and conducive to the Welfare of his Body, from what is Physically evil or hurtful thereto ; by which he is provided with Appetites to incline him to what is in that kind good, and to decline what is in that kind evil ; and with Passions to enforce those Appetites, and excite the other Faculties into Action ; all these Faculties Man has in common with other Animals ; but besides these, Man alone is endowed with Reason, a judicial Faculty capable of discerning Moral, Good, and Evil. This is the Faculty, in Regard of which Man is said to resemble his Creator, to be made after

the Image of God ; for no Man surely will fancy that God resembles Man in Limbs and Features, or the like ; this is that Conscience discerning Good and Evil, that Light of Nature, by which Man is informed and made conscious of moral Duties, even without the Direction and Impulse of Divine Revelation or Human Laws ; 'tis this Faculty alone, by which Man is capable of knowing God, and learning of his Word ; 'tis thro' this alone, that Mankind is capable of the united Strength, mutual Defence, Aid, and Comfort, of civil Society ; 'tis thro' this, that all other Animals become subservient to Man ; thro' lack of this alone all other Animals are incapable of Religion or moral Precepts ; thro this alone it is that Man is capable thereof ; as Religion is the highest Duty, so is Reason the highest Faculty which God has given Man ; and between which there is so strict a Relation and Dependence, that Reason is plainly the formal and immediate Subject, the very Basis and Ground-Plot of Religion ; without Reason

Reason nothing, not even the Species of Man himself, being capable of Religion. So much for the Nature of Mankind with regard to Religion.

NOW as to the third Relative of Religion, *viz.* 'its End or final Purpose ; from the Contemplation of the respective Natures or essential Attributes of God and Man, it may be firmly concluded. That in instituting Religion, the sole and adæquate End and Purpose of the Creator, was the sake and mutual Welfare of Mankind, in Society ; for first, as God is an intelligent, all wise Being, 'twere absurd to suppose that he would impose any Duties or Commands on Man to no Boot or Purpose, without any End to which those Duties were directed as a Means, 2^{dly} as God can be neither bettered nor worsted in his own Condition by any thing that can be done, omitted, or neglected, by Mankind ; it may be certainly inferred, that in the Institution of Religion, God could have no Self-interest or self-End in
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View ; that he did not institute it in any wise for his own Sake or Benefit ; but was wholly disinterested therein. *3dly*, As the Dread or Indignation of Rivalship or Superiority, and the Consciousness of past, and Fear of future Harm, being the only Grounds of Envy and of Hatred, are in no wise incident to an Omnipotent All-perfect Being ; 'twere no less absurd than impious to suppose, that our most gracious Creator had laid any Commands on Man with any envious or malevolent Intent ; whence it plainly follows, that in imposing his Commands upon Mankind, the sole Purpose and Intent of our no less gracious than wise Legislator, was solely and purely the Welfare of Mankind it self. And, *4thly*, as Mankind is capable of much more Happiness and Comfort in Society, than in a seperate solitary savage State of Life, so in such separate or savage State of Life, Man seems to need no other Motives or Inducements to preserve and promote his own well-being

being, but those common and universally innate Principles of instinct and Self-Love: And indeed Precepts, Laws, Rewards, and Punishments, to enforce the Principle of Self-Interest or Self-love, seem all together needless and absurd. Hence it plainly follows, that in our gracious Creator's imposing his Commands upon Mankind alone of all his Creatures, his sole Intent and View was, thereby so to regulate their Conduct towards each other, as best might suit their mutual Happiness and Comfort in Society; so to moderate and restrain that common and altogether necessary Principle of Self-Love, and so to temper and bound the same with that sociable and most fundamental Principles of Religion, Charity, Generosity, or general Benevolence to all our fellow Creatures of Mankind, that none may sacrifice to his own Appetites the Welfare of another, but may concert, aid, and mutually promote the Welfare of each other; and which is the Ground and a plain
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and adæquate Reason, why Self-Denial or the curbing and restraint of our too partial, enormous, or irregular Appetites and Passions, is a necessary and religious Duty. Nor can it be supposed that a gracious God can envy or deny to his Creatures any Use of those Faculties, or the Enjoyment of those Blessings, which he has bestowed on them, other than such as might be offensive and injurious to our Neighbour and pernicious to Society, God plainly taking no Delight (like savage Tyrants upon Earth) in any the Afflictions, Misery, or Unhappiness, but rather in the common Happiness and Welfare of Mankind; such savage and malicious Delight being an Attribute much rather applicable to the Malevolence of an Enemy and Destroyer than to the allowed and uncontested Benignity of an infinitely good and gracious Father and Creator.

PERHAPS it may be objected, that in laying his Commands on Man, the sole, or at least the chief End and Purpose

Purpose of God was his own Glory. But if by that Word, Glory, they mean any Benefit towards himself that God proposed therein, 'tis plainly absurd; 'tis inconsistent with the All-sufficiency and Perfection of his Essence and with his Omnipotence, to be capable of lacking or desiring any thing for himself; and much more to depend upon the Will of Man or of any other being for the obtaining or conserving any thing he could desire; to suppose that God has any Self-End, any Purpose for his own Sake to be served, in his commands to Man, is a notion too ungenerous, of too debased alloy to Quadrate with an All-sufficient Independent, and infinitely Benevolent being; as tho' his Love was bounded by his Interest, and his infinite goodness could be Circumscribed, and contracted to the same scanty Measure, and be grounded upon the same narrow basis with the corrupt Love, and Friendship of the most ungenerous and partially Self-End of Man-

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kind, such Notions are incompatible to, and altogether unbecoming our August Creator ; his disinterested regard for the Welfare of Mankind, the chief and principal work of his Creation, being plainly the only view and motive worthy of himself, and answerable to the infinity of his goodness toward Mankind, so that we may very reasonably acquiesce in the Formentioned conclusion, *viz.* That the Adæquate end and purpose of Religion as instituted by God, is the common Welfare of Mankind in Society.

NOW as the common Nature of Mankind is, and ever was the same ; and as the Nature of God is immutable, and eternally the same ; it naturally follows that the End or final purpose of Religion, and also the fundamental Duties or means directed to that End ever were invariably the same. For inasmuch as the Subject, and occasion of instituting Religion, *viz.* Human Nature, hath not since its Creation been any wise altered ; and inasmuch

asmuch as the Wisdom of God could in no degree be mistaken in the Nature, and efficacy of the means addestin'd toward that End ; there can be no reason why God should vary, either the respective End or means theretodirected. From which consideration sprung that noted Aphorisme of the Schools, that the Nature of Good and Evil (*viz.* moral Good and Evil) are immutable : Hence we may justly assume it as a rule or principle that the fundamental Duties of Religion ever were and must be the same, and Coæval to human nature. And according St. *John* in his 1st *Epistle* Ch. 13th ver. 11th, and in his 2d *Epistle* ver. the 5th and 6th tells us that the Duties he taught were no Novelties ; but what had been Duties from the Beginning. 2dly, as no agent whatever, in matching and suiting the Nature of things each aptly to the other, can come up to the Wisdom. of God ; hence we may justly assume another Rule or principle, *viz.* That what-

ever is a Fundamental Duty of Religion, must be justly congruous to that faculty of Man, which is the formal and immediate Subject of Religion, and by means of which only Mankind is thereof capable ; which is undoubtedly the faculty of Reason. And, *Thirdly*, As the final End or purpose, is always the criterion or standard whereby to take the Rule and Measure of the respective Means ; we may assume it as another Principle, that whatever is a Fundamental Duty of Religion, must be immediately conducive or expedient to this End, *viz.* To the common Welfare of Mankind in Society ; and *é* reverso, whatever is not conducive or useless towards that purpose ; and much more whatever is noxious thereunto ; cannot be Duties of Religion, as not being applicable or repugnant to the End thereof.

• HENCE follows that whatever is truly Genuinely a Fundamental Duty of the *Catholick* or universal Religion must have these three inseperable Conditions,

ditions, *viz.* *First*, it must be a Duty that has been Coæval with Human Nature, and which must invariably so continue while Human Nature has existence: *Secondly*, It must be congruous to Reason, the only Religious faculty of Man: And, *Thirdly*, it must be immediately conducive to the constant End of Religion, the common Welfare of Mankind in Society.

NOW as those Principles are so clear and evident, that no one can without the grossest prejudice, and partiality disallow them; so by comparing to them the three great social Duties, Charity, Justice, and Temperance or Self-denyal, (which by a common appellation are usually called morality or moral virtue;) we shall find them in every respect conformable thereto: And which do Adæquately answer to that great and comprehensive precept of our Saviour *viz.* to Love our Neighbour as our Selves.

BY Charity is not to be meant that narrow notion of Almsgiving, the effect

fect many times of ostentation more than of any real Good-will towards the Person ; but by Charity according to the just amplitude of the word, is to be understood a constant and steady Benevolence Good-will or Friendly disposition towards our Neighbour ; that is towards Mankind in general, without Discriminations and Exceptions of Nations, Countries, Customs, Usages, Complexions, or the like Inhuman as well as Unchristian Prejudices. Charity to be compleat, consists to three Branches, or integrant parts, *viz.* *First*, Commiseration or a Fellow-feeling of, and sorrow for the Sufferings of our Neighbour : And, *Secondly*, Congratulation or a friendly Joy, and Pleasure of Mind in the Felicity of our Neighbour ; with a Sincere inclination to relieve the one, and to promote the other : And, *Thirdly*, A friendly disposition to forgive Injuries, exacting no Punishment for the revenge of past, but only for the prevention of future Wrongs : The

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two former are the Virtuous sources of all good Offices amongst Mankind; the *Third*, A check to doing bad ones. Charity may be diversified into diverse species according to the diversity of Relations, natural and civil, between Mankind; as 'twixt Parents and Children, Masters and Servant, Magistrate and Subject, and the like; of which some have special Names; as Piety is the special Charity or Benevolent affection of the Child towards the Parent and othersome note;

JUSTICE is a Resolution or constant disposition of Mind to do to every Person so, and no otherwise, that as we should upon a parity of Circumstances, turning as 'twere the Tables, deem fair and reasonable to be done to our selves; and it consists of two Articles, or integrant Parts; the one Privative, *viz.* To do no Wrong or Injury to any Person; the other Positive, *viz.* To perform to every one what is right and due. As Charity, so likewise Justice may be distributed into diverse species

species according to the diversity of Cases, and Relations of Mankind to each other ; so Obedience to the Magistrate according (or in proportion) to his Authority, is the right of the Magistrate, and due from the Subject : and on tother side 'tis the duty of the Magistrate, not to oppress ; but impartially to protect, diligently defending, and redressing Wrongs, and impartially dispensing Rewards and Punishments duely proportionate to Merits and Offences according to the extent of his Authority ; the Violation of any of which Duties, is immediately injurious to some, and Consequentially pernicious to the whole community. So likewise Veracity, Sincerity, Fidelity or Trustiness, and the like, come directly under the Head of Justice ; for as our Neighbour may be Injured by Fraud, as well as by Force or Violence ; so all falshood and deceit, all conceiling or disguising the Truth designedly or even wittingly tending to the Detriment of our Neighbour,

of labour, is plainly contrary to Justice ;
and to as being what we should not approve,
Ma- if so done to our selves.

excessively and irregular, in such measure and manner, as may be Offensive and Pernicious to Society. And which is the very Ground, and a Plain, and Adæquate Reason, why Self-denial or the Reasonable Curbing and restraint of our too partial or enormous Appetites, and Passions is a necessary, and Religious duty : Nor can it be supposed that a gracious God, can envy or deny to his Creatures any use of those Faculties or Enjoyment of those Blessings which he has bestowed on them ; other than such as might be Offensive and Injurious to each other, and pernicious to Society ; God plainly taking no delight (like savage Tyrants here on Earth) in any the Afflictions, Mysery or unhappiness ; but rather in the common Happiness and Welfare of Mankind ; such savage and malicious delight being an attribute much rather applicable to the Malevolence of an Enemy and destroyer ; than to the allowed and uncontested benignity of an infinitely good and gracious Father and Creator. NOW

NOW these three great Social duties (called by a common Name Morality) have all the conditions required by the Rules aforesaid, they are so Self-evidently congruous to the universal Reason or Conscience of Mankind, that no People or Nation was ever so Barbarous, and Stupid, as to disallow them: Whereupon St. *Paul* justly Remarks, that were there no express Law (Human or Divine,) yet the Light of Nature would be a sufficient guide, our own Conscience informing what were Good, and what were Evil. *Secondly*, They are all Duties Coæval with Mankind, being of perpetual and universal obligation thro' all Ages and Countries: And, *Lastly*, They are in their own nature Adæquate, (that is both necessary and sufficient) to the great and sole End of true Religion, the common Welfare of Mankind in Society; for would all Mankind be strictly careful in the observance of the Duties of Charity, Justice and Temperance or, Self-denyal in

their due extent according to the Dictates of Impartial Reason, and Unprejudiced Conscience, without any further Motive ; Mankind might be as happy as any Precepts, Laws, or Rules could make 'em : in such Case, Rewards and Punishments both Human and Divine, both civil Government and Religious awe were merely useless and Superfluos, the End being fully attain'd without their Aid.

BUT forasmuch as Mankind is plainly Subject, and but too prone to suffer themselves to be seduced, by the influence of Diverse Temptations, to swerve from the Dictates of their own Consciences ; therefore besides the bare knowledge of Right and Wrong, of what is morally Good and Evil, some further Motives were plainly requisite to ballance against those Temptations, to keep Mankind up to the observance of those so necessary Duties, and to deter them from the Violation of the same ; for this purpose was Instituted, Civil Magistracy
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and Dominion; and so these same Social Duties, which in the *First*, Instance were the Laws of Conscience, and Rules of impartial Reason, (and which are by St. *Paul* call'd the Laws of nature) receive the Sanction of civil Authority become Laws Political enforced by Political Rewards and Punishments.

YET how often do Egregious Crimes escape the Penalties ordain'd by Human Laws: The Magistrate can punish so far only as Offences can be manifestly known and Proved, and how often are the springs of Villany and Mischief kept secret and deep hid by wary craft? How oft doth Fraud beguile, do Bribes corrupt, doth partial enmity or Favour Sway, or fear of factious and illegal force o'er bear the Justice of the Magistrate? Thus Civil Magistracy or Government, tho' very useful, and even necessary towards this purpose; yet is plainly not sufficient to effect the same compleatly, without some further Means. Wherefore

fore our gracious and All-wise Creator hath Vouchsafed to add a further weight to these so necessary Duties, by giving them the further Sunction of Religion, or Divine Precept, making them his Laws by exprefs revelation, and enforcing them by Divine Rewards, and Punishments to be awarded from his own dread and impartial Tribunal; whose cognizance no subtle craft, clandestin Deeds, or even silent Thoughts, and Wishes can escape; whose steddy Justice no Fraud can deceive, no Bribe can byass, no partial passion or affection sway, no Threats, no Force, no Fear, can any way rabate.

THIS is the surest and most effectual means to enforce the Dictates of impartial Conscience or Reason; the Civil Magistrate can only watch over, and controul the outward Acts as obvious to the Organs of outward Sense; but Religion, or the Laws of Conscience enforced by Rewards, and Punishments Divine, doth justly temper
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regulate and modify the Thoughts and Affections, the very Springs and secret Motives of the outward Acts, so as to answer the Common End of Conscience, of Civil Government, and of Religion. For, to what End was Man endued with Conscience or impartial Reason? Was Government or Human Dominion Instituted? For what did God Ordain Religion; but for the common good of Man? As hath been argued above.

HENCE we may observe, that the immediate and Fundamental (i. e. constant and unalterable) Duties of Conscience or unprejudiced and impartial Reason, of uncorrupted politie, and of uncorrupted and unbyassed Religion, do justly coincide, and are the very same thing under different aspects, and enforced by different motives and considerations, *viz.* Morality or Moral Virtue.

NOR can it be thought strange that Reason and Religion should so agree; if we consider that the Gift
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of Reason, and of Religion did both proceed from the same All-wise Author, were both implanted Adæquately in the same Subject, and both inseperably destin'd towards the same End or Purpose ; that it rather would have been strange, had our All-wise Creator enjoyned any thing as a Religious Duty, that was unreasonable and discordant to the very foundation and ground-work that he himself had layed, to make Man capable of Religion, *viz.* The faculty of Reason ; for why is not a Horse, an Oxe, an Ass taught to know their Creator, and the Duties of Religion ? Why are they incapable, but only that they have not Reason. So much as to the primary and immediate Duties of Religion.

NOW tho' the Duties of Morality in their own nature are Adæquate to, and sufficient for the happiness of Mankind in Society ; yet inasmuch as to keep a Man up to the just observance, and to deter him from the Violation of those moral Duties, Rewards

wards and Punishments Divine, as well as Human are necessary : So farasmuch as these important considerations of Divine Rewards and Punishments, can have but little or no avail, where there is any Dis-belief or Doubt, of the inevitable certainty of them ; therefore Faith or a full trust and confidence in the invariable Justice and Veracity, as well as in the Wisdom and Omnipotence of God, is a necessary means to the due enforcement of these Moral Duties. Aagain tho' the inevitable certainty of Divine Rewards and Punishments, should be never so firmly believed and credited ; yet when they are out of Thought and Mind, they can have little or no influence upon the conduct of Men's Actions ; therefore Divine Worship in order to keep God, and his Judgements so constantly in our Thoughts, as to have a due influence upon our Moral Conduct, is likewise another necessary duty of Religion ; the Moral Duties of Charity, Justice and

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Temperance, or Self-denyal are indeed the principal and immediate Duties of Religion, as which immediately effect the end or purpose thereof: And Religions Faith and Worship are but as ancillary Duties and secondary Means, which of their own nature without Morality could by no means effect the happiness of Mankind in Society; but which do really, and effectually conduce thereby, by being subservient, as enforcements to those principal and immediate Duties.

Religious Faith therefore, or Faith so far as it is a Religious Duty, is not a trust or confidence in Man; for the Holy Scriptures expressly warn us not to put our Trust in Man; but 'tis a full Trust and Confidence in the Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Veracity of God, who neither can be deceived, nor will deceive; but will impartially award and apply Rewards and Punishments, without exception or respect of Persons, to every one according to their Works; or in other Words, according to

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Du- to their observance, and keeping up to
ate- or violating and deviating from those
of : Precepts which he had prescribed to
are them for the regulation of their con-
ary duct towards each other for the com-
ure mon Welfare of Mankind, as afore-
ans said.

So- THE immediate objects therefore
fec- of Religious Faith are the Wisdom
ub- Power veracity and justice of God ;
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quence, Derived to his revealed Word.
Faith For whoever trusts in the infallible
not Wisdom, Power and Veracity of God ;
the can never doubt the truth of his re-
not vealed Word : and for this reason Re-
full ligious Faith or Credit was given to
om, the Revelations of our Saviour, and
God, the Prophets of old ; not as to the
will Words of Men of superior human fa-
ard culties or learning ; but as to the Word
nts, of God delivered by the Mouths of
Per- Men, divinely inspired for that pur-
neir pose ; and that Faith or Credit was
ing safely founded upon those surely Di-
to vine credentials, viz. The uprightness

of their Morals, both in Doctrine and in Practice ; enforced and seconded by the Gift and Power of doing Miraculous Works ; Works obvious to the Senses and Understandings of Mankind ; yet much beyond the Power of meer human faculties to effect. But without such sure Credentials to apply Religious Faith to the Word of Man would not only be a part of very imprudent and dangerous credulity, subjecting our selves to all manner of Impostures, Delusions and seductions ; but would also be a sinful and Idolatrous Misapplication of that Faith and Confidence to the Creature, which is peculiarly due to the Creator only ; (the Sin commonly denoted by the Word Idolatry plainly consisting in the Misapplying Religious Faith, as well as Religious Worship, and do generally go together ; for who can sincerely apply Divine Worship to any thing in which he hath not a Religious Faith ?) 'Tis plainly putting that trust and Confidence in Man, that is expressly forbid

forbid by the Holy Scripture. And on the other Hand ; for any Person without such Authority and Credentials, to claim Religious Faith as due to his own Word ; would be a most impious and audacious presumption.

Accordingly our Saviour himself reproaching the infidelity of the *Jews*, appeals to their own Senses, and declares that if he himself had not don among them such Works as were beyond the Power of Man to do, they had not been guilty of a Sin in not giving him Faith or Credit, that he was sent by God to Teach his Word : and where the *Jews* charge him with doing Miracles by a diabolical Power, and also where he warns his disciple against false Prophets and Sham-miraclemungers ; he refers them to their own Reason, bidding them to judge the Tree by its Fruits.

THE Religious Duty of Divine Worship, so as Ordain'd by God, seems to be a meer act of the Mind ; namely a constant contemplation of
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God and his Laws, or Precepts in order to keep the due observance and avoid the Violation of the same, for the common Welfare of Mankind : But as the Affections of the Mind do usually break-forth into outward Acts ; and such outward Acts have usually an effect upon the Minds of others ; so the outward Worship of God may well consist of any sort of decent Acts, by which we seriously recal into our own and others Minds, the Contemplation of God and of the duties which he hath enjoynd for the common Welfare of Mankind, and of those Rewards and Punishments, which he has promised and denounced as Motives to enforce the due observance of the same.

AS to the end or purpose of Divine Worship ; the enforcing of Morality for the common Welfare of Mankind, seems to be a purpose truly Religious, truly Consonant to the nature and attributes of God, and worthy of an infinitely gracious Benevolent

lent and disinterested Father of Mankind : And the Religious Worship of the true God, is plainly a very apposite and effectual means towards that end or purpose, and well-becoming the judgment of an all-wise being. But as to the vulgar crude notion, that the ultimate, and sole end, and purpose of Divine Worship is the Honour and Glory of God ; esteeming the out-ward Worship of God to be the chief, the highest and most important Duty of Religion, and therefore chusing to neglect any, the immediate Duties of Morality on Pretence of serving God, or doing God service as they must absurdly phrase it. Let them remember that God needs no service from them, nor can they do him any real service or benefit ; but when they have don their utmost, they are still but Unprofitable Servants as to him. Nor is it consistent with the nature of an all-wise being to order Means to no purpose, or such Means as are improper and unavailable
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to the respective Purpose. Let them consider how unworthy, and unbecoming an Omnipotent, All-sufficient, All-wise God must be the notion that his interest and Welfare should in any wise interfere with any, the interests or Welfare of his Creatures; and that he instituted Religion in general, or Religious Worship in particular, purely for his own Glory or Honour, or any other Self-ended view. How absurd a speculation is it, to impute to an All-perfect Self-sufficient and immutable being, such Passions, Affections and Appetites as denote Want and Imperfection; and even such as in our selves are reputed as Infirmities, and Blemishes in the Characters of Mortal Men? Such as to desire, covet and be delighted with Gifts presents and Offerings? To take pride and vainly glory in gawdy Pomp and Pageantry? And in the praises reverences and Worship (or as in other cases we should call, it, the flatteries and courtship) of Men? To be wrathful and angry at the neglect

neglect or omission of such Honours and
 Worship? To fear or be uneasy at the
 Diminution or alteration of any acts
 or forms thereof? Or to need the aid
 of Fiery zeal and Head-long bigots to
 vindicate his Cause, and to be his
 champins in ruining and destroying
 their fellow Mortals as formidable
 Enemies to an Omnipotent God? Can
 an All-perfect, Self-sufficient Omnipotent
 being need any Offerings presents
 or allotments of places for his own
 use? Can he want Habitation, Food
 or Rayment for himself, and depend
 upon the bounty of his own Creatures
 for the same? Can he stand in need if
 covet or fear any act or omission of his
 Creatures: Can an All-perfect and
 immutable being be capable of any
 access of happiness delight or pleasure?
 of any access of Misery grief or pain?
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the end proposed ; and nothing like those acts of Sense and passion incident to Mankind.

'Twas such absurd notions as these that made the wisest of the antient Heathens dispise those objects which the vulgar so stupidly revered and Worshiped as Gods ; and paved the way for the propogation of the Christian Religion. For what a contemptible Notion of the Gods must any thinking Person conceive, if he can suppose them to be affected with the like Passions and Follies, as Mankind are subject to ? To be vainly pleased and glory in the humble Cringes and Adulations of their Creatures and Dependants ; to be delighted with the Blood of Beasts and smoak of reeking Altars ; to be wrathful, peavish, angry, and revengeful, upon any Neglect or Mismanagement of such Affairs ; that their Favour was venal, and might be purchased ; and their Justice attoned, satisfied, and commuted for by gifts offerings Bribes and Mercenary Compositions ;

positions ; instead of disinterested and graciously munificent Benefactors to Mankind, to play the part of crafty, Self-interested, mercenary Traffickers for Wealth and Honour ; and such like Notions, absurd enough, as applyed to those imaginary Deities ; but much more so, when applyed to the true God ; as being all-together inconsistent with the compleat Perfection Self-sufficiency Wisdom and Justice of the supreme Omnipotent unrivalled Being.

AS to the Point of Glory and Honour, to come closer there to ; Man indeed may reasonably covet Glory and Delight in the Honours Praises and Courtship of Men ; as being not only the Signs and Tokens, but also a Means of acquiring, prepogating, and preserving, the esteem of Men ; and thereby of prevailing and succeeding in his Undertakings : whereas on the other hand, Infamy Disesteem Contempt and the like, are great Obstacles to success in Human Affaris. But all Love and Desire of Honour and Praise beyond

such Purpose, is deem'd meer Vanity and Folly even in Mankind. And as an Omnipotent Being can neither fear such Obstacles nor lack such Aids ; so neither to an all-wise Being can Vanity and Folly be in any wise incident, such Notions of human-like Wants Passions and Affections; of real Benefit, Service, disservice, and the like; are much more suitable to the Superstitious Worship of the shades, or Ghosts of Dead Men and Women, of heathenish Deities and modern Saints (deceased Mortals both, both idolized alike;) who may be supposed by their bigotted Votaries, to be delighted and offended by the like Means and Objects, as when a Live and conversant with Mankind; and the Interests, Views, and Passions imputed to them, may be much more serviceable and agreeable to the selfish Ends of crafty Priests, than the disinterested Precepts of an Omnipotent, self-sufficient, and All-benevolent being. Which is a very obvious Reason why Priestcraft hath ever as it were a
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natural Tendency towards Superstition and Idolatry.

SINCE then our Creator can receive no real Benefit or Service from such Acts as are called Worship or serving of God ; but which acts may apparently operate and tend towards the Benefit of Mankind ; 'tis much more reasonable to refer them as means towards the Service Benefit and Welfare of Mankind, towards which they may be available than toward ; the Benefit, Service, and Welfare of God, towards which they cannot in the least contribute or avail.

DIVINE Worship, so far as it is an act of the Mind, seems to consist of two Genuine Branches ; *viz.* Of Humiliation and Prayer or supplication, for such things as we lack ; and of rejoycing and thanksgiving for the Blessings we have received. For as Humiliation is the Genuine attendant of Prayers or Supplications, so rejoycing is the natural Attendant of Thanksgiving.

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AS to the Sounds of the Voice, the Postures Acts, and Gestures of the Body and the like, by which those Affections of the mind are expressed and represented to the Senses ; it doth not appear that God hath instituted and enjoined as universal and invariable Duties any certain Rules, Forms, or Modes ; but seems to have left those Matters at large, to be adjusted According to the respective Customs, Modes, and Fashions of each Country and People ; so as their be nothing repugnant to the Duties of Morality therein. For altho' we find that Mankind did in the most early Ages celebrate their religious Rejoycings and Thanksgivings in Festivals, commemorative Feasts, or Sacrifices ; in Songs Psalms or Hymns in instrumental Musick, Dancing and the like ; which were approved by Heaven, as being aptly conducive to the respective Purpose, and no ways impugning any moral Duty : Yet we dont find that those special Acts were originally instituted
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and enjoyn'd by God as universal Duties ; much less the particular Fashions or Modes of performing the same ; as neither being necessary but even disagreeable to the Purpose. For what Custom has rendred *Habile*, fashionable, familiar, and agreeable, or (as 'tis usually termed) decent in one place or People ; may seem altogether strange uncouth barbarous indecent and ridiculous in others ; and consequently unfit to represent and communicate the serious Affections of the Mind. And what Customs and Fashions may be very agreeable, and commodious and expedient, in one Country, may be very inconvenient uneasy and disagreeable in another : for instance, how strange and ridiculous amongst us would seem the Posture of prostration by way of Humiliation and Prayer ? The Posture of sitting Cross-Legged upon the level like Taylors ? Or lying reclin'd at length on Bedds at Meals and Festivals ? Yet what more proper decent and agreeable in their respective

spective Times and Places? Again, should we not think a Man mad, that should now celebrate or express his Grief, Sorrow, or Humiliation, upon any Occasion after the ancient *Hebrew* Mode, in Raggs, in Dirt, and Squallidness of Body, for the Purpose tearing his Cloaths or Garments, smudging his Face, his Head, his Hands and Body, with Dust and ashes, refusing to take Sustenance in Sullenness and Fasting, and the like? So further, what is more agreeable and expedient in hot Climates, than their Customs of loose Garments, of frequent Washings, Bathings, and Anointings? And how incommodious and disagreeable would such Fashions be in cold ones? And therefore such particular Customs and Fashions are by no means Proper for universal Practice. Such Matters may be regulated by the particular Legislature of the respective Countries or Nations; but were not surely instituted originally by
Heaven,

Heaven, nor imposed upon Mankind as universal or *Catholick* Duties.

NOW that the three moral Duties, Charity or Brotherly Love, Justice, and Temperance or Self-denyal; and the two ancillary Duties of Faith or Trust in God, and of divine Worship as above specified; are Duties truly *Catholick*, Duties of universal Obligation upon all Mankind in all Places, and in all Times from the Creation 'till the final Dissolution of human Nature; may from what is above set forth be very reasonably concluded; and if no other Duty can be found, that has been of universal Obligation upon all Mankind in all Ages as well as Places, since the Creation; it may be safely concluded, that the truly *Catholick* Religion, pure, Genuine, and unsophisticated, doth consist of those three Branches only *viz.* of Morality, of Faith in God, and of Divine Worship.

SUCH indeed seems to have been the simple State of Religion in the first

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Ages, before the Introduction and Substitution of Superstition and Idolatry by the Ambition and Avarice of the heathen Kings and Priests of old.

THE Preference, that is for the afore said Reasons given to the Duties of Morality before the Duties of Religious Faith and Worship, will be ('tis to be hoped) the less condemned, for that Charity, Brotherly Love, or loving our Neighbour as our self, (which is the very Essence and Basis, the *Alpha* and *Omega* of Morality,) was the darling Precept of the ever Blessed *Messiah*; and that St. *Paul*, comparing Charity with Faith and hope (*id est*, with Trust and Confidence in God) doth expressly give the Preference to Charity, which he says plainly is the very End of the Commandment, *id est* of revealed Religion; and without which all our Pretences of Worship, Faith, good Works, Sufferings, and Merits, are but as the tinkling of Cymbals and of no avail. But Charity he tells us is the Bond of all Perfection;

ness. Where under the Name of Charity seems to be denoted Morality in general; moral Justice and moral Temperance, being both in Effect comprehended in the word Charity as proper Branches thereof: For whoever truly Loves his Neighbour as himself, would no more wrong his Neighbour, than he would wrong himself; nor waste profusely what might be necessary to the Welfare of his Neighbour, than what might be necessary to his own. And in this extensive and comprehensive Acceptation is the word Charity for the most part used in the holy Scriptures: And in this Sense plainly 'tis that *St. Paul* explains himself in the 13th Chap. of his Epistle to the *Romans* when he asserts that Love or Charity is the full Scope and Accomplishment, the very End and Fulfilling of the whole Law; *id est* of Christs precepts or revealed Religion; and the like in the 13th Chap. of his 1st Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and is intirely agreeable to our Saviours own Declarations

clarations in diverse Places of the Gospel ; as particularly where he says ; *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them ;* (which is the adequate and convertible Rule of all Morality,) and concludes *for this is the Law and the Prophets.* So likewise *Matth.* the 19th being asked *what was sufficient to Salvation ;* he omits all the rest of the *Musaick Law*, and recites the moral Duties only ; as which were the only final necessary and indispensable Duties of Religion : and accordingly *Luke* the 13th Chap. verse the 35th he declares Charity or Brotherly Love to be the true Badge and genuine Characteristick of his disciples.

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